

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 005980

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/31/2015

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KJUS](#) [CO](#) [OAS](#) [AUC](#)

SUBJECT: AUC'S HEROES OF TOLOVA DEMOBILIZE

REF: A. BOGOTA 005310

[1](#)B. BOGOTA 005567

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood; reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: Over 450 members of the "Heroes of Tolova Bloc of the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) demobilized on June 15. Both government and paramilitary speakers welcomed the move and encouraged demobilizing forces to return to a peaceful, civilian life. Diego Murillo ("Don Berna") attended the ceremony under police supervision and formally demobilized at the end of the event. Other paramilitary leaders like Salvatore Mancuso and Javier Montanez remained quiet during the ceremony. GOC officials have established an organized procedure for processing demobilized fighters and are satisfied they have fixed the interagency communication problems. End summary.

-----  
Heroes of Tolova Leave the AUC  
-----

[1](#)2. (U) The AUC's Heroes of Tolova Bloc demobilized on June 15, in the first ceremony since La Mojana Bloc demobilized last February. The group historically had been a protection force for AUC leader Diego Murillo, ("Don Berna" or "Adolfo Paz") and was the first to demobilize after his surrender on May 27 (Ref A). The Heroes of Tolova disbanded in the hamlet of "Altos de la Rusia Ocho", in Valencia municipality, central Cordoba Department. The Bloc was made up of 464 fighters, many from the immediate area. The fighters turned in 256 weapons during the ceremony. Young locals accounted for the majority of fighters in the Bloc. Many said they planned to find employment by working on area farms. Since 2003, 5,284 paramilitaries have demobilized in collective processes.

-----  
Restrepo Discusses GOC Security Efforts  
-----

[1](#)3. (U) High Commissioner for Peace Luis Carlos Restrepo spoke on behalf of the GOC at the ceremony, and local government officials also addressed the group. He welcomed the latest demobilization and said the GOC had plans to launch a security pilot program in Cordoba. The program would allow enhanced means of communication between the citizens and military/police forces in the area. Restrepo emphasized that the government would be able to better defend the area with information on threats against Cordoba communities. He also mentioned plans to provide basic education to any fighters who did not complete their basic education. In addition to the Heroes of Tolova, Restrepo will be attending four other demobilizations over the next couple of months (Ref B).

-----  
Don Berna Leaves the AUC  
-----

[1](#)4. (C) As part of Murillo's surrender agreement, the GOC temporarily named him an active AUC member and gave him permission to attend the ceremony under police supervision. Murillo arrived by police helicopter from his house arrest location and was returned immediately after the ceremony ended. Emboffs passed the site on the way to the demobilization ceremony. The property consists of a small house and a stable for horses but was modest in contrast to Don Berna's Rialito home, according to the Director for National Reintegration, Juan David Angel. He added that Murillo's holding site belonged to a fellow AUC member who offered the use of his property with the GOC's concurrence. Several locals stopped to take pictures, but the heavy police security kept gawkers behind the perimeter.

[1](#)5. (C) When the ceremony began, Murillo proceeded directly to the head table and later addressed troops. He told the Heroes of Tolova Bloc that his journey towards peace started over a year ago with the demobilization of the Cacique Nutibara Bloc (BCN) in Medellin and would continue. He reassured the troops that they could rely on the government to protect them from guerrilla activity and encouraged them to return to a peaceful, productive life. Although the troops cheered Murillo's words, they also literally kissed their weapons good-bye as they handed them over to OAS verification officials. Some of the more senior paramilitary

members saluted the AUC commanders as they moved back into the ranks. Murillo signed the renunciation of violence document on behalf of the Bloc.

-----  
Baez Tones Down Rhetoric, Other Leaders Remain Quiet  
-----

16. (U) Bombastic paramilitary commander "Ernesto Baez" remained relatively subdued during his speech. He claimed that Restrepo was an "intransigent enemy for illegal armed groups," but asserted that both the AUC and government were working towards the same ultimate objective of peace in Colombia. He further mentioned that Restrepo had shown AUC leaders the connection between institution building and national peace. Baez did not raise the Justice and Peace legislation, but he did pledge that the AUC would neither coerce nor interfere in the 2006 elections in any way. "Even if the Congress provokes us with leftist legislation, we will not interfere," said Baez.

17. (U) Salvatore Mancuso and Javier Montanez also attended the ceremony but did not address the crowd. Mancuso remained behind stage throughout the process and then boarded his vehicle out of public view. He told Angel that he did not want to cause a stir with his presence. Other than brief conversations with AUC leaders on the margins of the event, he did not participate. Montanez was at the head table but also remained quiet. Vicente Castano, a new player in the AUC negotiations, did not attend.

-----  
GOC Officials Pleased with Demobilization Procedures  
-----

18. (C) Angel and Restrepo both told Embassy attendees they were pleased with the process (i.e. registration, identification, and legal processing on candidates) and noted that demobilization procedures had improved with each group. Angel explained the process during a tour as he showed Emboffs the rooms used to collect information, process identification cards and sign renunciations of violence. The Heroes of Tolova were the first bloc to have an armory where fighters could rest their weapons while being processed.

19. (C) Interior Ministry staff commented that registration was a particular issue with the Bloc because almost forty members lacked identification cards and the local registrar refused to process documents on Wednesdays, Saturdays or Sundays. By the day of the official ceremony, ten people still awaited their identification. Nevertheless, the interagency cooperation between David's reinsertion staff and Restrepo's peace process staff has improved over previous demobilizations. "I think we have finally gotten it right," said Restrepo.  
WOOD